



The "Extras": Condiments, Dressings, and Drinks

Beverages: An Asset or Liability?

When we are making a conscious effort to improve our health and lose or maintain weight, we typically pay close attention to the types and amounts of foods we eat. The same is not always true about what we drink.

The average American drinks one out of five of their daily calories. These calories can really add up and be considered "empty" if our beverage does not contribute towards our daily nutrient needs.



Soda pop is an example of an empty calorie drink. Pop contains large amounts of sugar with little else. Grabbing a diet soda may seem like a better choice, but it does not have any nutrient value either. There is also a variety of mixed research related to diet pop and its role in weight loss, weight maintenance and weight gain.

Other examples of beverages that cost calories with few health benefits include specialty coffee drinks, alcoholic beverages, energy and sports drinks, and fruit drinks with added sugars. Some of these may have more added nutrients than pop, but you can find the same vitamins and minerals along with additional benefits in low-calorie foods or healthier beverage choices.

Water should be the top beverage of choice. Water is necessary for keeping bodily fluids in balance and helps with digestion, absorption, circulation, transportation of nutrients, and maintenance of body temperature. It energizes muscles, helps kidneys cleanse and rid our body of waste, supports normal bowel function, and prevents a number of disorders. It can also play a role in controlling calories. Use it in place of high calorie beverages or drink it right before and during a meal to help you feel fuller faster.

Other healthy drink options include 100% juice, low-fat dairy products, and zero calorie choices such as unsweetened tea and coffee. Except for fiber, the nutrient level of 100% fruit and vegetable juices can be very much the same as a whole fruit or vegetable itself. Be sure you are drinking 100% juice, though. If the label says fruit/juice drink, cocktail or fruit-flavored it contains added sugars and possibly little to no real juice. Also consider portion size. Juice is more concentrated in calories and natural sugars than the fruit or vegetable itself. For example, a half cup of apple juice would have almost the same number of calories and carbohydrates (sugars) as one cup of apple slices.

Smoothies are a wonderful way to add fruit and vegetables to your day. Make your own to avoid added sweeteners and whole milk products that premade smoothie products commonly contain. Non-fat or low-fat milk or non-dairy milk (such as soy and almond) are great sources of protein and calcium. Add them to your smoothie or create your own low-calorie steamer.

Don't be fooled by the grams of sugar and calories listed on the standard beverage bottle label, which is for just one serving. Often, in a 20 oz. bottle there are 2.5 servings. However, many people will drink the entire bottle rather than sticking with just one serving from the bottle. So really, they are consuming 2.5 times the amount of sugar and calories listed.

Condiments

Just like a main dish, even condiment portions can become distorted in terms of serving size. Moderation is a key component when looking at any meal. A tablespoon of any particular condiment isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it can become a problem if covering a sandwich with

Portion Distortion

What you're served



1/2 lb. cheeseburger, French fries, 3/4 cup ketchup, tomato slice and lettuce.
2,343 calories
93 grams fat

What's one serving



1/4 lb. cheeseburger, half the French fries, 2 tablespoons ketchup, tomato slice and lettuce.
585 calories
33 grams fat

it or using a cup of it in a recipe. Often thought of as a well-balanced dish can easily become one with extra calories and sugar added after condiments or dressings get added. A key to being successful with your health goals is being prepared. When eating out, order steamed, grilled, or broiled dishes instead of sautéed, fried or ones in gravy or sauces that will add extra calories. Ask for salad dressings and sauces on the side so you can control the amount.

Condiments have a bad reputation as many are high in added sugar and salt. When chosen carefully, condiments can make your dishes pleasant while adding nutrients and beneficial components to your meals. There are many condiments that compliment your meal without adding so many calories. Adding herbs and spices are also a great option to adding flavor to your meal without adding the extra calories, sugar, and salt.

Resources:

- 8 Condiments with Health Benefits to add to your meal plan: <https://www.afpafitness.com/blog/8-condiments-with-big-health-benefits-to-add-to-your-meal-plan>
- 20 Healthy Condiments: <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/list-of-condiments>
- Add Herbs and Spices: [Cooking Tools, Tips and Techniques \(unl.edu\)](#)



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AHW Lesson Activities "Applying the Lesson"

Choose one of the following activities to apply what you learned about your health and your healthy goal setting. Write a short response (3 to 5 sentences) to describe what you did and learned from the activity selected. Report your Applying the Lesson results by Online form, email, fax or hard copy to your county Extension Office.

Option 1: Look at the label on your favorite sugary drink. How many servings are in the bottle? How many calories per bottle? How many grams of sugar? How many teaspoons of sugar does this equate out to be? (1 gram of sugar is equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon, or 4 grams of sugar is roughly one teaspoon.)

Take out a teaspoon and measure the sugar in your favorite drink into a container. Report back your findings.

Option 2: Track the condiments you add to your food for 3 days. Keep in mind the portion size of each condiment and try to consciously reduce the amount you add to your food. This includes salad dressings, sauces, mustards, or mayonnaise. Looking at the labels of each, how many extra calories, sugar, or salt are you adding to your meal?

Option 3: Write a goal for the week to help you consume less sugar in your beverages.